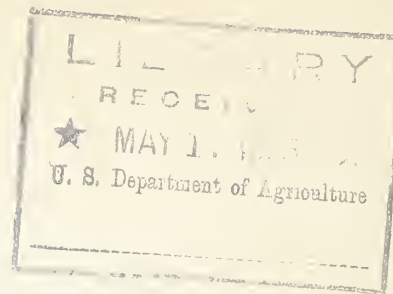


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### FORESTS AFFORD A HUGE WORK RESERVOIR

A radio talk by C. M. Granger, Director, Emergency Conservation Work, Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, broadcast Friday, April 26, 1935, in the Conservation Day period, National Farm and Home Hour, by NBC and a network of 60 associate radio stations.

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What can our forests contribute in work opportunities for unemployment relief?

Forest lands constitute almost one-third the total land area of the continental United States. They stand ready, now, with useful, non-competitive, wealth-producing jobs for nearly a million men.

This is a startling figure. What is behind it? How can there be such a huge work reservoir in a country where so many men are jobless? In answering these questions, the report of the National Resources Board tells a story of more than 200 years of heedlessness and waste in the use of our once boundless forest resources.

To the pioneer who landed on these shores in the seventeenth century, two tools were essential; a gun to kill the game that gave him food and clothing, an ax to clear the ground for home, plowland and pasture. There could have been no American civilization without these two.

Yet we, descendants of pioneers, now realize that these instruments were used not wisely, but too well; that of the two the ax was, perhaps, the more deadly. For sometimes that ax felled trees on lands that never should have been cleared for farming. From such little farms the settlers moved on, but the damage unwittingly done did not vanish. And later, when lumbering became an industry, whole forests were exploited.

In this process a trail of "ghost" towns were left as forest exploitation advanced from New England through the Lake States, the South and on to the Pacific Coast. Fires, caused all too often by carelessness, swept over great areas. And from watersheds stripped of forest cover, rains ran down the mountainsides and disastrous floods came, carrying silt and boulders into distant valleys and rivers. Whole sections were gutted of their fertile topsoil and rendered unfit for cultivation.

Men are needed to rebuild and restore these, and to protect and develop other, forest lands; men to clear fire breaks, construct forest roads, lookout towers and telephone lines in order to facilitate fire control and forest administration; men to establish nurseries, improve fish, game, and recreational facilities, thin and improve existing forests and plant new ones; men to control erosion and to develop watersheds.

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These are jobs long planned as necessary for protection and administration of the National Forests. Located in 37 States, Alaska and Puerto Rico, these federally owned forest lands have already helped to meet the present emergency; their work-program has been speeded up; young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps - from every State - have found in them, and in State and privately owned forests, jobs when jobs were so desperately needed.

One immediate purpose of this program was, it is true, to provide relief. But the projects were so planned and executed that the work was essentially an investment. Non-competitive with industry, that work was constructive and worth while. Rebuilding young men, it contributed to the nation's welfare. Rebuilding the forests, it added to the national wealth, - helped put forest lands in condition so that, under sustained-yield management, they may permanently contribute, with some sense of security and stability, to the support of their fair share of the country's population.

What forest lands have done, in our emergency, they can do again. For they constitute a huge work-reservoir; they stand ready, when occasion arises, with non-competitive worth-while jobs for another million men.

I have spoken of the opportunities for work which are afforded in the process of rebuilding depleted forest lands. And I have had in mind, quite largely, those forest lands classed as commercial - that is, capable of producing timber of commercial quantity and quality and available for use. Naturally so, for since they make up the bulk of the most highly productive and the most accessible forest lands in the country, they are vital to the national welfare.

Four-fifths of those commercial forest lands are now in private ownership. And they are the ones which have suffered most. For, financed on a basis of rapid liquidation, the lumber industry has operated to remove timber rapidly: to move on and on, with little thought to the future of its cut-over lands.

Thus exploited, then abandoned, it is estimated that there now is, in long-time tax delinquency, a national total of at least 75 million acres of this cut-over forest land. Unfitted for the most part for agriculture, - most valuable still for forest purposes despite the fact that it is largely without adequate protection from fire, - this "no man's land" - which is nearly as large as Iowa and Kansas combined, although it brings in neither taxes nor revenue, - threatens the economic stability of farming, of manufacturing, of local government. It constitutes a menace.

It also raises the question - who shall own our forest lands? This is important, for public interests extend far beyond the forest areas which are today in public ownership. Those interests are firmly vested, not only in commercial forest lands - four-fifths of which are in private hands - but in that entire forest empire which constitutes today almost one-third the total land area of the continental United States, and which must be so managed that it may contribute, with security and stability, to the permanent support of its fair share of the nation's population.

Public opinion feels, it is true, that there is no social advantage in substituting public management of industry if private initiative can and will accomplish the same social objectives at no greater costs to the public. But it also feels that when private initiative fails to meet the needs of the people the Government must step in to protect those public interests.

So - since the entire forest program of the Federal Government is based on this principle, - the matter of ownership will be discussed in the next of this series of informal talks on that part of the National Resources Board report which has to do with Forestry in Land Use Planning.